

To: Federal Communications Commission Staff

From: Andy Hennis, Business Development Manager, Christensen Communications Company

Date: 3/7/14

Subject: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Trials Docket 10-90

Background:

Christensen Communications Company (CCC) is the local phone and internet provider (ILEC) in Madelia, a small rural community of 2,300 people in south central Minnesota. CCC is also a CLEC in the communities of St. James (pop. 4,605) and LaSalle (pop. 87) and the surrounding rural areas of Watonwan County. Watonwan County has a total population of approximately 11,200 with a per capita income of \$24,760. About 11.7% of the population falls below the poverty line. CCC has a current customer base including 1,147 phone/internet customers and 120 internet only customers. We would like to expand our broadband service area to include the rural areas of Lewisville, Butterfield, Darfur, Odin, Ormsby and the surrounding rural areas where there are very few, if any, options for service.

Geographic Territory:

Christensen Communications Company's service territory includes portions of Watonwan County, a rural county of 440 square miles, with approximately 26 people per square mile. Census tract numbers for the area include 27165950100, 27165950200 and 27165950300.

Anchor Institutions:

Schools: There are a total of six schools in the area including Madelia Elementary, Madelia High School and St. Mary's Education Center in Madelia, Northside Elementary and St. James High School in St. James, and Butterfield-Odin Public School in Butterfield.

Libraries: Libraries in the area include multiple branches of the Watonwan County Library System. They are the Watonwan County-St. James Branch Library, Madelia Branch Library, Butterfield Branch Library, Lewisville Branch Library and Darfur Branch Library.



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Health Care: There are two healthcare facilities in our service area including the Madelia Community Hospital and Clinic and Mayo Clinic Health Systems – St. James.

Government Centers: The Watonwan County Courthouse is located in St. James, MN which houses all County Departments. The City offices of Madelia, St. James, Butterfield, LaSalle, Lewisville, Darfur, Odin and Ormsby are also located in the census tract area.

Connectivity: Currently the Watonwan County Courthouse, the City offices of Madelia and St. James and the Madelia and St. James branches of the Watonwan County Library are all connected through Christensen Communication Company's fiber network.

Proposed Technology Platform:

Christensen Communications currently utilizes two towers to deploy fixed wireless broadband in the LaSalle and St. James rural areas. We plan to deploy four additional tower sites in the areas of Lewisville, Darfur, Butterfield and Odin using both 900 MHz and 2.4 GHz unlicensed frequencies. We also have a license for 3.65 GHz to use as needed in highly congested areas. 5.8 GHz will be used for backhaul. We will offer speed packages of between 4Mbps/1Mbps and 12Mbps/1Mbps which meets or exceeds the new goals set by the FCC.

State and/or Local or Tribal Governmental participation:

Watonwan County has been supportive of spreading broadband access to rural residents in general but we don't have any current plans for specific participation with the County or Local governments.

Existing Providers:

In Watonwan County there are currently a number of different providers. In the town of Madelia Christensen Communications is the only DSL provider with Comcast offering broadband through a coaxial cable network. In the rural areas surrounding Madelia, CCC is the only broadband provider through DSL. In the town of St. James CCC offers broadband to businesses through fiber and to some residences through fixed wireless. CenturyLink offers broadband through DSL and Mediacom offers broadband through coaxial cable. In the rural areas surrounding St. James, CCC offers fixed wireless and CenturyLink offers DSL to some areas. Butterfield, Lewisville, Odin and Ormsby all

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currently receive service from Frontier through DSL although it is very poor in many areas, especially the sparsely populated rural areas of the County.

Project Timeline:

A timeline will be finalized when funding is secured and/or budgeted. Land and towers or leases for existing towers will need to be finalized prior to further deployment.

Scalability:

The goal of Christensen Communications is to be the single most reliable broadband provider for Watonwan County. We feel that a fixed wireless network is the most cost effective, easily deployable method of reaching unserved and underserved areas at this time.

Total Investment:

The total cost of the project will be \$350,000 in one-time capital expenditures.